DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 382 421 RC 020 064

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TITLE	Knowledge of the Elders: The Iroquois Condolence Cane Tradition.
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	32p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Akwe:kon Press, 300 Caldwell Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853 ($8; 10 or more, 40 percent discount).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Culture; American Indian Education; *American Indian History; Cultural Education; Cultural Maintenance; Folk Culture; High Schools; *Iroquois (Tribe); Leadership; *Oral Tradition; *Peace; Reading Materials; Religion; Study Guides
IDENTIFIERS	*Ceremonies; *Iroquois Confederacy

ABSTRACT

This study guide, developed for high school students, looks at Eastern Woodlands history and tradition through the words of Cayuga Nation elder Jacob Thomas. The Six Nations, also known as the Iroquois, are a confederacy of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora tribes. The Iroquois have a population of more than 60,000 living in 14 reservations and several urban centers in New York, Ontario, Quebec, Wisconsin, and Oklahoma. The guide focuses on the Condolence ceremony by which chiefs are inducted into the nation councils represented in the Grand Council of the Iroquois Confederacy, or League of the Haudenosaunee. The ceremony also prescribes the customs to be followed at times of death, both of common people and of leaders. Wampum belts, sympathy strings, and a carved Condolence Cane are used in the ceremony. The Condolence Cane is a mnemonic device that depicts the "seating" arrangement of the Grand Council confederacy chiefs from clans in the Six Nations. Each chief's title is represented by a peg and a pictograph depicting aspects of the title or the story of each title holder's first encounter with the Peacemaker. The Peacemaker's mission was to bring peace to the warring nations of the Eastern Woodlands, and his efforts resulted in the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy. The story of the coming of the Peacemaker, with its many attendant teachings including the Condolence, is the backbone of Iroquois ritual culture. Chief Thomas also discusses the Thanksgiving Address, a central prayer in the Longhouse religion used to open and close civil and religious meetings. The guide includes discussions by Peter Jemison concerning Jikonsaseh, the Peacemaker's ally and first Clan Mother in the Great Law of Peace; by Audrey Shenandoah, a contemporary Clan Mother at Onondaga, who discusses the leadership role of women; and by Tom Porter, a Mohawk Chief, who discusses qualities of a Council Chief. Includes a list of additional resources, student learning activities, and suggested readings. (LP)

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